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WRNMMC, NSAB, USU, NMPDC Frock Nearly 100 Sailors to Next Rank



Photo by HMI Johnathan Barnes

Twelve newly frocked Sailors from Navy Medicine Professional Development Center (NMPDC) on Naval Support Activity Bethesda pose for a photo with NMPDC Commanding Officer Capt. Phillip Sanchez and HMCM Peter Rona, NMPDC command master chief, June 9.



Photo by MC3 Hank Gettys

Navy Counselor 1st Class Alberto Bruzon, Naval Support Activity Bethesda housing leading petty officer is frocked during a ceremony on the installation June 5.

**By Bernard Little,
WRNMMC
Public Affairs
Contributors: NSAB,
USUHS and NMPDC
Public Affairs**

Commands on Naval Support Activity Bethesda (NSAB) including Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC), the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) and the Navy Medicine Professional Development Center (NMPDC) held frocking ceremonies last week for nearly 100 Sailors who are assuming greater responsibility and leadership roles in their new ranks.

According to military historians, the term “frocking” can be traced back to the Age of Sail, the early modern period in which international trade and naval warfare were dominated by sailing ships, lasting from the 16th to the mid-19th century. The tradition permits newly-advanced Sailors to wear the rank and assume the responsibilities of the pay grade for which they have been selected for promotion



Photo by Bernard S. Little

Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) Director Maj. Gen. (Dr.) Jeffrey B. Clark, (third row, left) and WRNMMC Command Master Chief Tyrone Willis (third row, right) congratulate WRNMMC’s newly-frocked Sailors during a ceremony held June 5 in Memorial Auditorium.

before receiving the pay raise that comes with the advancement.

Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) frocked 70 Sailors before a standing-room-only crowd in Memorial Auditorium June 5.

“This is a big day for our Sailors who will walk across the stage, and for their families,” said Maj. Gen. Jeffrey B. Clark, WRNMMC director. “WRNMMC Command Master Chief (CMC) Willis and I are very pleased that so many families and friends are here today.

Clark added that over a service member’s career, be it 4 years or 30, their family is serving with them. He then asked all families of service members in attendance to stand and be recognized as those gathered applauded them.

“It is good for us to gather, and today we gather for the frocking ceremony of [our] Sailors,” Clark continued. “Promotion is recognition of potential to serve at the next rank. It’s based on performance and certain other criteria.

“These Sailors under-

stand what CMC Willis and I expect of them: they will step up; they must lead; they must role model our core values; they must take care of those they are privileged to lead; they must also keep those we are privileged to serve, our patients, in the center of all that we do; and they will take a leading role to [enable us to] meet everything in our Strategic Plan,” the general said. “CMC Willis and I expect no less.”

NMPDC frocked 12 Sailors June 9.

“What an exciting time in the career path of

these newly frocked Sailors and their families,” said NMPDC Command Master Chief HMCM Peter Rona. “Advancement is directly attributable to each Sailor’s hard work, and we’ve been blessed to have some of the hardest working young Sailors I’ve seen in my career. I’m extremely proud of all of those frocked today and look forward to watching their continued career growth.”

Chief Hospital Corpsman Ruben Palkin, leading chief petty officer for NMPDC’s Directorate for Administration and staff

mentor for junior Sailors, explained: “The frocking of a Sailor is a career milestone. Each level comes with a different level of responsibility, authority and respect. The Sailors frocked to Petty Officer Third Class are taking the first memorable step in their careers. The frocked Second Class Petty Officers become the work center supervisors and handle the daily tasks. The First Class Petty Officer is working to Chief and the expectations are high that they begin to perform at that level. Each should be commended for achieving the next step in their careers.”

At USU, HM2 Stephen Petroske, who is assigned to USU’s Department of Laboratory Animal Medicine, was frocked to his current rank from HM3.

“Petty Officer Petroske has grown tremendously since he checked on board at USU,” said Command Master Chief Patrick Hyde, USU’s Command Senior Enlisted Leader. “He really understands the mission and scope of

NSAB's MWR Hosts 'Color Me 5K' Run



Naval Support Activity Bethesda's Morale, Welfare and Recreation held the 'Color Me 5K' run on base June 13. The event drew hundreds of participants who ran a route around the base through color stations where volunteers doused them with various colors, giving the event its name, and ended with a cookout and concert by country music artist Jamie Tate.



Bethesda Notebook

'Medical Journey with Hope'

Lee Woodruff, whose husband television journalist Bob Woodruff received care at the former National Naval Medical Center (NNMC) after being injured by a roadside bomb in Iraq in 2006, will speak at Walter Reed Bethesda on June 19 at 2 p.m. in the Memorial Auditorium. All staff members are invited to attend. She will discuss her family's journey to recovery following her husband's injuries, which included a traumatic brain injury.

Cancer Research, Awareness Day

The John P. Murtha Cancer Center hosts the Annual Cancer Research Seminar on June 22 from 8 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. in the America Bldg., second floor, Rm. 2525. Registration is required for Continuous Medical Education Credits. Also, Cancer Awareness Day is June 23 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the America Bldg. first floor lobby. For more information about the events, contact Erica Dugger at 301-295-0558 (Erica.dugger.ctr@mail.mil) or Bill Mahr at 301-400-1492 (William.p.mahr.ctr@mail.mil).

Organizational Day

Organizational Day at Walter Reed Bethesda is June 25 from 1 to 4 p.m. in front of the Tower. Bring your family to enjoy free food, music and other activities. Everyone is invited.

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240 Years of Service

Celebrating the Army's Birthday

By MC1(AW)
Chris Krucke
WRNMMC Public
Affairs staff writer

Nearly 200 service members, as well as civilians, contractors and volunteers honored the 240th birthday of the U.S. Army June 14 with a cake-cutting celebration during morning colors in front of the Tower at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC).

Per tradition, at 8 a.m. the nation's flag was hoisted up the massive flag pole to fly during daylight hours, showing pride in our great country.

Army Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Clark, director of WRNMMC, was the first speaker at the ceremony, followed by Army Master Sgt. Staci Harrison, senior enlisted leader of the Patient Experience Team.

With all service members attending the ceremony, Harrison said events like this "help us to understand and build respect for each other's traditions and history."

Navy Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Alejandra

McKeever, executive assistant to the Command Senior Enlisted Leader, said, "It was fantastic. I was very appreciative of the inclusiveness of this event. As the different branches gathered to celebrate, it felt as if all siblings gathered to rejoice during one of our sibling's birthdays."

The event concluded with a cake cutting, using an officer's cutlass. Following tradition, the cake was cut by the most senior and junior Army members in attendance – Clark and Pvt. Brittany Maxwell, respectively.

"I felt honored to have been chosen to cut the cake. Usually, very important high ranking members are chosen to do these things so it was great that they also included [me]," said Maxwell. "Everyone had a lot of fun and it was great to have everyone together to honor this day. Events like this help because it brings everyone together and [it] helps remind us that we are all one big team. It's very important to cherish one another and to not forget that

we are all here for each other."

The Army was founded June 14, 1775, when the Continental Congress authorized the enlistment of riflemen to serve the United Colonies for a year. More than 675,000 Soldiers make up today's Army, to include 488,000 on active duty and 189,000 in the Army Reserve. Over the past 240 years of service defending the freedom of American citizens and America's allies, the U.S. Army has made significant advancements in technology, training and personnel.

Harrison, McKeever and Maxwell expressed their appreciation for the many advancements throughout the Army's history, and for being able to serve in an equitable field.

Harrison said she initially joined the California National Guard for the tuition assistance, and so loved the comradery, traditions, military culture and way of life, that she enlisted into active duty as soon as she returned home from Ba-



Photo by MC1(AW) Chris Krucke

Nearly 200 Army and Navy members honored the 240th birthday of the U.S. Army during morning colors in front of the historic tower at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC).

sic Training. She knew then that she wanted to be a first sergeant.

"Being a woman was a non-issue in having a successful career," said Harrison. "The military is probably one of the most equitable professions when it comes to gender. I have never felt that my gender has ever had an impact on my military career, when it counted anyway. It has always been my initiative, performance and demonstrated abilities

that have had the greatest impact."

McKeever said she joined the military because she wanted to do something far greater than herself and the ability to help others in ways she never thought possible, and the military has given her just that.

"It is quite refreshing and it makes me appreciate the fact that we, as females, have the honor and privilege to serve alongside the many amazing men and other

women across the entire military," she added.

Maxwell, who joined the military in October, said, "I also wanted to make a career for myself and do something honorable with my life. I also knew that joining the military would make my parents very proud of me."

"I am a humble member of a team and a time-honored profession, an American Soldier and non-commissioned officer. I am honored to serve," said Harrison.

Yoga: Ancient Practice Helps Today's Patients

By Sharon
Renee Taylor
WRNMMC
Staff Writer

Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) offers 7-West inpatient psychiatry patients daily yoga classes. Patients in the WRNMMC four-week, psychiatric outpatient Continuity Service 'day program' also receive yoga therapy in a weekly session. It appears the centuries-old practice involving postures, stretches, meditation and breathing provides benefits today.

"Individuals with mental disorders are increasingly turning to integrative medicine, including yoga and meditation, for relief of their symptoms," said

Inpatient Psychiatry Service Chief, Navy Lt. Cmdr. Benjamin Hershey, who explained the trend has also been observed among active duty service members.

Yoga emerged between 200 B.C. and 300 A.D. In the ancient language of India known as Sanskrit, 'Yog' means 'Yoke' or 'Union' (of mind, body and spirit).

Today, yoga can be used to treat anxiety and depression by reducing perceived stress. It also improves mood and functioning. In addition to depression, studies have examined the efficacy of yoga therapy in the treatment of schizophrenia as well as post-traumatic stress disorder.

"There is a strong and growing evidence base regarding a range of psychological and physiologi-

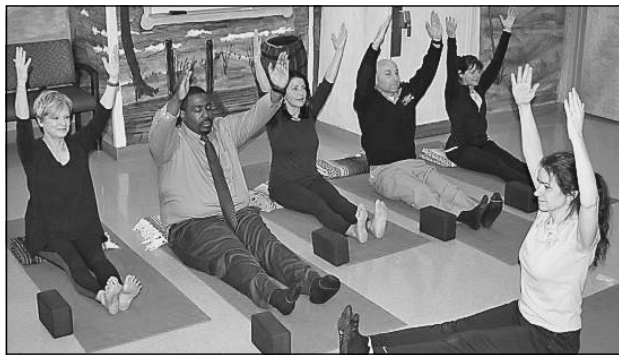


Photo by Katrina Skinner

Yoga is one of several mind-body skills offered at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center's 7-West inpatient psychiatry ward and in the four-week, psychiatric outpatient Continuity Service "day program." Staff members recently participated in one of the classes.

cal benefits associate with these interventions," Hershey said.

A psychiatric inpatient study presented at the 2014 American Psychiatric

Association annual meeting showed voluntary, regular yoga classes self-rated as beneficial to overall treatment in 82.2 percent of participants.

"Our study indicates that patients may have a greater satisfaction with their psychiatric units as well as increased mood, decreased anxiety and greater feeling of physical well-being when participating in a voluntary yoga program in an inpatient psychiatric setting," the researchers wrote in an abstract.

The daily yoga class for psychiatric inpatients on 7-West began four years ago. Daphne Vourlekis, a licensed certified clinical social worker on the ward, started the program with volunteer yoga instructors.

Beginning as chair yoga, the program eventually expanded to use mats and occasional standing poses. The 7-West class teaches gentle yoga, and generally consists of medita-

tion, breathing techniques, stretching, and gentle yoga poses.

"It is always a go-at-your-own-pace class," Vourlekis explained. Patients are encouraged to find their edge, the point of mild discomfort without pain—and not move beyond it. This will help prevent moderate pain or injuries, she said.

The daily yoga classes are voluntary, and patient attendance rates range between 30 to 80 percent. Patients experience body relaxation, feel more at ease and less tense, Vourlekis said.

"There is nothing like hearing a glowing firsthand report from a previously skeptical patient

See YOGA page 6

Exchange Program Allows German Doctor to See Inside U.S. Military

By Andrew Damstedt
NSAB Public Affairs staff writer

Cmdr. (Dr.) Peter Fellmer has been stopped more frequently recently because his uniform looks a bit different than ones normally seen onboard Naval Support Activity Bethesda.

That's because his uniform is issued by the German navy (Deutsche Marine) reserve, joint medical service.

Fellmer, a vascular surgeon, came to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) on a Military Reserve Exchange Program in which he was integrated into the vascular surgery department for two weeks.

"One of the important goals of this program is to be incorporated in the units," Fellmer said. "So I thought the most helpful thing was to participate in a vascular unit so I could have some vascular interaction."

The integration of the Wounded Warrior program in the medical center is one thing that has impressed Fellmer on his visit.

"It's something we don't have too much experience in and we don't have so many casualties or injuries during combat yet," Fellmer said. "And this is an interesting thing to see how this treatment is integrated in the hospital besides treating regular patients."

He was also fascinated by the Fisher House Foundation houses on the installation that provide housing for service members and their families while they are receiving treatment at the hospital.

"That's what I really found impressive that you have to offer," he said. In his civilian life, Fellmer is an associate professor of surgery/vice chief of the division of vascular surgery at the Niederrhein-Klinikum Duisburg. He received his medical degree from the University of Goettingen in 1998 and has done training abroad at other medical schools, including University of Michigan,



Photo by Andrew Damstedt

Cmdr. (Dr.) Peter Fellmer of the German navy reserve gives a presentation on minimization of surgery for carotid artery stenosis to members of the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center vascular surgery department. Fellmer was integrated into the department for two weeks as part of a Military Reserve Exchange Program.

Ann Arbor and Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston.

Fellmer said he wanted to come to WRNMMC because of its reputation in caring for wounded service members. He said he has been well-accepted by the vascular surgery department staff and they've had plenty of fruitful discussions.

"My surprise is that I'm really nicely accepted here and they really look to discuss issues with me and that's really nice," Fellmer said.

He shared with them how the German Joint Medical Service operates and he gave a presentation on a way to do minimally invasive surgery for carotid artery stenosis. That presentation left Army Col. (Dr.) Robert Craig, a WRNMMC vascular surgeon, with a lot to think about after Fellmer finished because Craig said he hadn't heard of doing the surgery that way before.

"It was very insightful," Craig said. "I've never seen that technique described that way before. It left a lot to think about – the results are impressive."

Craig said Fellmer's visit has been excellent as "it's been a good exchange, not only on a military level, but on a

professional level as well, as vascular surgeons."

Fellmer said he was grateful for the hospitality extended to him on this visit. Army Capt. Robert Gooch of the North Carolina 518 Sustainment Brigade in Knightdale, N.C., was assigned to assist Fellmer and make his visit run as smooth as possible.

"It's been a lot of fun

just to work with him and get shared experiences and to just sit down and talk about the command structure and see how things work differently from a leadership standpoint," said Gooch, who is going on his own exchange to the United Kingdom in September.

Gooch, a health operations officer, said one thing he found interest-

ing was to discuss with Fellmer Germany's health care system, which has had a universal health program for years and then compare it to how the United States has been rolling out the Affordable Care Act.

What Fellmer said he is going to take back with him to Germany is the need for doing research and collecting data in a

military environment as well as a desire to keep in touch with the people he met here.

Being away from his family has been difficult, he said, especially on his daughter Clara's sixth birthday, but he was able to talk to her through an online video chat. The three weeks he's away on this exchange is shorter than the length of a usual German deployment for a medical officer, which Fellmer said lasts between six weeks to three months.

"But I realize that members of the U.S. Armed Forces, they stay away for nine months – so this is not really comparable," Fellmer said. "So I respect them for being deployed for a long period."

One of the many times Fellmer was stopped here was during his first days in downtown Washington, D.C. when he was out on a guided tour with other German service members.

"A lot of U.S. citizens they came to us and thanked us for our service and they are really open minded and it was really nice," Fellmer said. "We've been able to talk to a lot of people on the street presenting ourselves and the German Armed Forces, and people are very interested in that."



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FROCK

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what we do here and has demonstrated great potential.”

In addition to being proficient in their jobs as well as hard work, another key to the promotions of the newly-frocked Sailors was successfully studying for their advancement exams.

“Study, study, study,” is how WRNMMC’s newly-promoted Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Melissa Freeman described her preparation for promotion. “It requires hard work and motivation to be promoted. I feel that more junior Sailors will look to me for guidance, and senior enlisted will expect me to pass on the guidance they have given me through the years,” she added.

Newly-frocked HM2 Rhesa M. Cantu, said of her promotion, “Today was the best day of my naval career so far. I feel happy, proud, empowered, confident, and humbled all at the same time. I feel like I have so much information to give to young Sailors...I have always tried to perform at a higher level, but now I

will be entrusted to take on even bigger projects. I have tried to set myself up for success as a second class [petty officer]. I took some non-required leadership training, and have done sit downs with leadership, [as well as] asked questions about how to handle certain situations. But even with all that, it is hard to prepare for something that can have so many twists and turns. I won’t really know what to expect until I go through it, and I am excited to see what happens.”

“I made all three ranks here at Walter Reed Bethesda, and I am very happy that I was able to make E-6 here. Walter Reed Bethesda is full of opportunities, and I am grateful to have been a part of it,” said newly-frocked Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Buddhika Abeyratne.

The 2014 WRNMMC Sailor of the Year, Abeyratne has been selected to pursue medical studies in San Antonio as part of a commissioning program beginning in August. Concerning his promotion, the HM1 said, “I look at it as an opportunity to help junior enlisted Sailors and Soldiers see the path to advancement. I

try to give them the best example and do everything I can to empower them to achieve their goals.”

NSAB frocked 10 Sailors during a ceremony in Bldg. 17, June 5.

“There is no better day in the Navy than when I have the opportunity to recognize and reward the performance of our staff, and there is no better example of that than via the frocking ceremony,” said Capt. David A. Bitonti, NSAB commanding officer. “Not only does it acknowledge

academic performance on the advancement examination, but it highlights leadership potential, and the expectation that each Sailor will become more knowledgeable in their rate, develop leadership skills, and take care of their shipmates.

“The newly advanced petty officers have a responsibility to lead by example and to reach back to those Sailors junior to them and bring them forward. No one advances alone.”

With new rank comes more responsibility for

the recently frocked Sailors, and those aboard NSAB are ready for the challenge.

“It is a challenge that I am accepting and that I will take in stride and do as best as I can with it. It is a learning process,” said Master-at-Arms 1st Class Maegann Foster, leading petty officer for the administrative department at NSAB. “There are different steps of leadership at each paygrade, and I have had those different stages of leadership, as an E-4 learning how to run a

section, an E-5 actually running a section and now as an E-6 running a department. They are all different levels and it is something that there is a learning curve on, and you have to tackle it head on.”

To download the bibliographies for an upcoming advancement exam, Sailors can go to the Navy Advancement Center’s web portal on NKO at <https://www.nko.navy.mil/group/navy-advancement-center/exam-bibliographies>.

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YOGA

Continued from pg. 3

who decided to 'give it a shot' because it was so easily accessible to them during their hospitalization," Hershey added.

Yoga is taught in other areas of the medical center and base, available to all patients and staff, including the gym, as well as the integrative medicine program in the Internal Medicine Department. The ancient practice is also offered in a class for patients in the outpatient, Psychiatric Continuity Service 'day program', led by Dr. Bhagwan Bahroo, a staff psychiatrist at WRNMMC for more than 10 years, as well as an assistant professor of Psychiatry at the Uniformed Services University of Health Services (USUHS).

Bahroo was introduced to yoga as a high school student. Now a yogi, the psychiatrist offers a voluntary yoga class on Mondays at 11 a.m. for patients in the psychiatric 'day program.' Once a week, Bahroo incorporates two forms of yoga in an hour-long class: Hatha Yoga, a set of physical exercises and sequences of postures designed to align the skin, muscles, and bones, along with Ashtanga Yoga, which incorporates synchronized breath with postures.

"It's not fast-paced yoga," Bahroo said. The practice includes eye movement exercises that have been shown to be espe-

cially helpful for patients with PTSD, he explained.

"About 30 to 50 percent of the patients in the program take advantage of the yoga class," said the psychiatrist, who cited medical conditions that benefit from yoga including hypertension, mild heart conditions, obesity, difficulty breathing, high cholesterol and diabetes.

According to Bahroo, some of his patients think of yoga as an Asian, mystic practice, but those that participated in the class "felt it made a difference in their lives, their psyche well-being," he said, with additional patients citing a decrease in anxiety and migraines after particular positions.

A 2014 trial published in the Journal of Clinical Psychiatry examined the effect of yoga to decrease the symptoms of PTSD resistant to treatment in women. Half of those who practiced yoga during a weekly one-hour class for 10 weeks no longer met criteria for PTSD, and maintained their improvements.

Yoga is one of several mind-body skills taught in a series of classes offered as part of the Integrative Health and Wellness Services, of the General Internal Medicine Service at WRNMMC. A monthly class calendar is available in the main waiting area of the General Internal Medicine Clinic, on the second floor of the America Building (Bldg. 19), which can be reached at 301-295-0105 for more information on classes, dates and times. Classes are held in the clinic or in a nearby space.

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